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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003501

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: AL ANBAR GOVERNOR QUESTIONS GOVERNMENT'S  
COMMITMENT TO PROVINCE, FEDERALISM PROSPECTS

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Al Anbar cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Al Anbar Governor Ma'moun Sami Rasheed Al-Awani told MNF-W Deputy Commanding General and Al Anbar PolOff August 21 that central government officials appeared to want to sideline the province. The lack of sustained financial resources proved especially worrisome to him. Governor Ma'moun said flatly that PM Maliki's government makes us feel as if we are the enemy. He noted that most residents in the province opposed efforts toward federalism, equating it with division of Iraq. The governor himself did not see federalism as a problem, but added that a changed Sunni-Arab mindset on the matter would take several more years. He flagged that he wanted to reintroduce collection of local taxes within the province. END SUMMARY.

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COMMITMENT TO ANBAR QUESTIONED; GOVERNMENT WANTS ANARCHY HERE  
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13. (C) In a meeting held August 21 at the Government Center in central Ramadi, Governor Ma'moun Sami Rasheed Al-Awani told MNF-W Deputy Commanding General and PolOff that PM Al-Maliki's government needed to do more to demonstrate a genuine commitment to Al Anbar province. He listed several complaints, including a request letter that he had previously submitted to the Prime Minister's office that had yet to elicit a formal response - including reasons for arresting Al Anbar's provincial police chief. The governor also questioned the lack of financial resources committed to the province's rebuilding, beyond funds already allocated for Fallujah. COMMENT: Following extensive CF engagement, Minister of Finance Bayan Jabr recently agreed to release a portion (40 percent or USD 39M in dinar) of GOI-budgeted reconstruction money for Al Anbar projects, provided that the dinar be transported and safeguarded by Marines. This money has not yet been transported to Al Anbar; the province must first send a treasury representative to Baghdad, pick-up and cash the MoF check, and then coordinate transport of the bulk dinar. END COMMENT.

14. (C) Governor Ma'moun criticized the GOI's failure to reach out to Al Anbar more proactively and consistently. He said that the perception of Anbaris as the enemy seemed to prevail inside the current government, adding we need to fix this concept. The governor said that he believed GOI officials were trying to marginalize the province, and keep anarchy and the struggle here - and suggested that the Shia-led government favored prolonging CF in the fight against Sunni extremists. PolOff stressed the U.S.'s

continued support for PM Maliki's unity government, which included proportionate Sunni-Arab representation.

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FEDERALISM EQUALS DIVISION  
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15. (C) The populace in Anbar still rejected talk of federalism and equated it with the division of Iraq, according to Governor Ma'moun. He said that some GOI leaders would likely press the issue when the council of representatives reconvened. The concept was strange to most Anbaris, who believed it would lead to the destruction of the country. Personally, he did not see a problem with Iraq's eventual transition to a more federal structure, but a similar mindset among Sunni-Arabs would take several more years. The governor noted that we are still using weapons as dialogue; there is no free speech.

16. (C) Governor Ma'moun said that he wanted to re-establish a system of local taxes. This step would help the province address rebuilding needs internally, without total dependence on central government-controlled resources.

17. (C) COMMENT: Most in Al Anbar Province remain critical of the new government. Governor Ma'moun's frank criticisms point to underlying frustrations about the lack of tangible results post-election, particularly in lagging infrastructure investment and bureaucratically stymied rebuilding funds. Anbaris' automatic rejection of federalism might be lessened, over time, should they see a functional provincial government as an effective governing body and advocate in Baghdad. National-level Sunni-Arab political leaders have an opportunity to demonstrate

BAGHDAD 00003501 002 OF 002

success in winning basic constituent services for Al Anbar Province. So far, however, their failure - on top of perceived GOI policies to exclude the province - has only solidified Anbaris' pessimism and innate paranoia about the Shia-led government. END COMMENT.  
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